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# PRESS RELEASE

December 17, 2003

## **SAHIM ALWAN SENTENCED FOR** **PROVIDING MATERIAL SUPPORT TO AL QAEDA**

United States Attorney Michael A. Battle announced that Sahim Alwan was sentenced to nine and a half years in prison on a charge of providing material support to the al Qaeda terrorist organization by Hon. William M. Skretny.

Alwan was the last of the six defendants to be sentenced on charges of providing material support to a designated foreign terrorist organization, based on their attendance at an al Qaeda-affiliated training camp.

Alwan pleaded guilty to the material support charge in April 2003. The other five defendants have all pleaded guilty and are cooperating with the United States government.

Attorney General John Ashcroft congratulated the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of New York, the Criminal Division at the Department of Justice and the FBI for their work on the Buffalo case.

"Several important objectives in the war on terrorism have been achieved as a result of the convictions and sentences in the Buffalo case," Ashcroft said. "The

defendants in this case received strong sentences for providing material support to our terrorist enemies. At the same time, the government is gaining valuable assistance from these cooperating defendants, who traveled to the al Farooq camp and trained side-by-side with al Qaeda terrorists.”

U.S. Attorney Michael Battle of the Western District of New York stated: “The conclusion of this prosecution demonstrates that the U.S. government will pursue every lead in order to prevent future acts of terrorism. My office stands ready to assist in this effort by using all of our resources to investigate and prosecute terrorism matters.” Battle praised the hard work of the Joint Terrorism Task Force for their diligent law enforcement efforts in bringing this matter to conclusion, and he noted that the Lackawanna Six prosecution has already been recognized as a model of how to prosecute similar terrorism cases across the nation.

At his plea in April, Alwan admitted that in April 2001, he agreed to attend a military-type training camp in Afghanistan, along with the five co-defendants named in an indictment and others. The defendant knew, prior to departing the United States, that he was going to train for jihad. The plea agreement stated that Alwan received money from two other men to defray costs associated with jihad training.

Alwan admitted that he and others traveled from Buffalo, New York, and eventually arrived in Quetta, Pakistan, where they stayed at a guest house believed to be associated with Usama bin Laden and al Qaeda. They then traveled to a guest house in Kandahar, Afghanistan, where Alwan viewed videotapes and heard lectures which were anti-American in content, and which tried to justify suicide operations. Alwan admitted that on the fourth day at the guest house, he met bin Laden, and was

told that there were people willing to bear their souls in their hands for jihad.

Several days later, Alwan and others traveled to the al Farooq training camp, associated with bin Laden and al Qaeda. Over the next 10 days, Alwan and others worked under the direction and control of the al Qaeda organization, and received and took orders from instructors at the camp. Among other things, Alwan received training and instruction in the assembly and use of a Kalishikov rifle, and fired this weapon several times. Alwan left the al Farooq training camp after 10 days.

The charge on which Alwan was sentenced, a violation of Section 2339B of Title 18 of United States Code, prohibits anyone from knowingly providing or conspiring to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, as designated by the State Department. Al Qaeda was first designated an FTO in October 1999; that two-year designation was renewed in October 2001.

On December 3, 2003, co-defendant Mukhtar al-Bakri was sentenced to 10 years in prison on the material support charge. Yasein Taher was sentenced by Judge Skretny on December 4 to eight years in prison. Shafel Mosed was sentenced on December 9 to eight years in prison, and apologized in Court to President Bush and his fellow Americans for his criminal conduct. On December 10, Yahya Goba was sentenced to 10 years in prison. And on December 16, Faysal Galab was sentenced to seven years in prison, on his guilty plea to a charge of contributing services to al Qaeda and Usama bin Laden.

A seventh defendant charged in connection with this case, Jaber Elbaneh, of Lackawanna, New York, remains at large.

The Buffalo case was prosecuted by the office of U.S. Attorney Michael Battle for

the Western District of New York, in consultation with the Counterterrorism Section at the Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice. The investigation was led by the FBI in coordination with the Joint Terrorism Task Force and other federal, state and local law enforcement and intelligence agencies.